**Palm Sunday 2020 Sermon This moment matters**

**Waiting for life to begin again**

In Matthews account – Jesus enters a little like a Roman emperor (only humble on a donkey- not military might).

*Matthew 21.8 A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David!  Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!’*

The crowd says Hosanna which means “save us” because they are expecting salvific kingship from this bloke on a donkey.

The crowd have decided that this moment matters. Jesus has come riding into Jerusalem on a donkey (by the way this is a very Jewish kingly thing to do- since Solomon and the eschatological king in Zechariah both ride donkeys).

This lowly king is on a donkey (which evidently was a joke by the gentiles about the Jews- the Jewish kings are on beasts of burden not a mighty horse.) Jesus on a donkey is embracing a racial epithet, and making it somehow magnificent.

The crowds get all this and they start to get into the excited hysteria that crowds can, and it is too much to take….they have started lining his path with branches and throwing down their cloaks.

This is the sort of humility Roman emperors pay people for. But Jesus gets it for free.

Because in this moment the crowds have remembered what we all need to relearn over and over again….

**This moment is holy**

This will be a focus on some Holy Week meditations I will be putting up online this week.

The crowd in the gospel are blessed because they have a sense something is happening right now that is deeply important, and they are out and about to enjoy it together.

At the moment in some ways it seems like life is on hold.

We wait now for life to continue and for things to begin to matter again.

This COVID-19 thing is just something we have to live through until we can get back to our real lives and to important and valuable and things of worth.

We wait now for this year to pass so we can walk through a proper Holy week back in our church in 2021.

We wait until we can wave palm branches with the other local churches and remind people of their innate connection to the Easter story.

I say to you today, that far from being a time to pass, this is a deeply important time.

This moment in time matters, and we do not wait for another moment in time to matter more.

**We know that the sorrow matters right now**

I have a friend whose eyes filled with tears today as she told me she was having to let go a vulnerable employee who was in financial distress.

I have friends who have lost their jobs in the past two weeks and are worried about meeting their financial obligations. Members of the parish, and children of Parishioners have lost their jobs this week.

This stuff matters now because that sorrow is real and it in this holy moment.

I know many of you are missing big events, it was my birthday yesterday and I hardly noticed, some folks are missing holidays, missing money they thought they would have, missing freedom of movement, freedom to associate, freedom to watch the news without being scared half to death.

I heard the news described this week as 25 mins of Coronavirus and then the weather.

So this time DOES matters deeply for a lot of pretty sad and worrying reasons.

**The wonderful things that matter right now.**

But if we think this time is only about the horror of pandemic and the plague of panic I think we may also have missed half the story.

This moment matters just as much because wonderful things are also happening.

Wes and Melissa, whose daughter Talia was baptised at St Jude’s a while back are welcoming the arrival of their son Patrick! This is a time to celebrate him and give God thanks for him!

Because we have been getting in contact with all our friends on the role via the telephone tree we are making connections with some folks we have not been a regular part of the church family in years. This has been a huge blessing to us as a church.

We are innovating. I am learning how to use zoom and some new audio editing software. I am always thinking of both high tech and low-tech ways we can stay in contact and relish that challenge.

It is staggering, but more people are joining us in online worship at 9am on Sunday than normally come to church because people are prohibited from attending on any given Sunday for a range of reasons. St Jude’s actually miraculously grew this week even tough our worship was not on YouTube or Facebook but from our humble donkey of a website.

After Easter we will also work on our Facebook presence, and I know that will lead to more connections and growth which will help support people in tough times and good times in the weeks ahead during isolation.

I know may of you have been reaching out beyond our church via the phone after the challenge last week. I know some of those connections have been really amazing too.

Friends, we have to be more creative and more determined to keep alert to the potential of this moment to be thankful in and to be present in.

We come from a church that is hugely stubborn and wildly creative and we are going to keep that up in the weeks to come.

By way of inspiration about our stubborn and creative folks let me tell you about a certain 99yr old much loved treasure of this parish, who logged onto worship with you last week via their iPad and was very pleased with how it all went. They have received a call from their pastoral carer and were really thrilled about how connected they still felt to us all.

I want to tell you about another creative character who seizes her days too. When we started Jr Jude’s playgroup she was one of it’s biggest supporters even though she is not able to leave her unit as often as she would like now. She contributed more to the playgroup program than anyone else outside of the workers and organisers. She invited many families, some of her own and some from around her unit, and promoted us to anyone she could. She prayed for us and kept my spirits up about the venture. All from her living room.

These examples are people who would have every reason in the world to say “it’s all too hard” and “what can I do?” but they have not because they are stubborn and adapt and a knowledge, like the crowd on Palm Sunday that today matters.

Let’s join with them St Jude’s.

We are going to walk this holy week together and it is going to count,

and it is going to move us, and it is going to challenge us,

 and we are going to witness in new ways and we are going to be church in new ways.

We are more than that building at the top of Jetty Rd Brighton, much as we love it.

We will make this Palm Sunday from our homes and in our communities.

Today I ask you to join me in putting a palm branch on your front gate or your front door, as a sign of the start of the Holiest week in the churches calendar.

If you do not have palm, (notice that the account in Matthew does not specify what tree the branch it is from) you can use any piece of greenery.

An on Easter Sunday please add to that greenery with flowers or decoration of any kind you can.

Let’s leave our greenery up this week and invite passers-by to think about this day and the week we are entering. I told you that the time for being a quiet Christian had passed. Here is another challenge to get our faith into the sunlight where it belongs.

God bless you and your home and loved ones this Holy Week. And it is holy.

The Lord be with you!